



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

NEWS

ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH – GOVERNOR

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Governor Blagojevich announces significant decline in teen driving fatalities; final winning schools for *Operation Teen Safe Driving*

SPRINGFIELD – Governor Rod R. Blagojevich, Secretary of State Jesse White, the Governors Highway Safety Association, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), Illinois State Police (ISP), Ford Motor Company Fund, The Allstate Foundation, and supporters of *Operation Teen Safe Driving* today announced the final round of winning schools to participate in the statewide safety initiative designed to educate teens about safe driving to save lives. This announcement comes as Illinois records a significant decline in teen fatalities in automobile crashes so far this year. From January 1st through April 15th, 22 teens (ages 16-19) lost their lives on Illinois roadways. During the same time period last year, there were 57 deaths.

In total, 104 high schools statewide were selected to participate in the innovative program, modeled after Ford's nationally recognized *Driving Skills for Life* teen safety program. Announced in November 2007, the program empowers high school students to educate their peers about driving in hopes of decreasing the number of fatalities and crashes involving teenagers in Illinois.

"This significant drop in fatalities is a credit to the efforts of high school students in Illinois, who are taking the initiative to educate their peers about the dangers and responsibilities that come along with driving a car," said Gov. Blagojevich. "The efforts of these students, combined with several tough new Illinois laws, are making a big difference in reducing the number of teen fatalities on our roads."

The new teen driver safety law initiated by Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White makes Illinois' graduated driver licensing program one of the best in the nation. Effective January 1, 2008, the law gives teens more time to obtain valuable driving experience while under the watchful eye of a parent or guardian, limits in-car distractions, and requires the teens to earn their way from one stage to the next by avoiding traffic convictions. Leading national traffic safety experts have lauded the law as one that will save lives.

Another important law initiated by White and signed into law by Governor Blagojevich took effect January 1, 2007 and doubled the practice time from 25 to 50 hours that young drivers must

spend with a parent or guardian before the teen can obtain an Illinois driver's license. Of these 50 hours, at least 10 must be done at night. The additional hours give novice teen drivers more driving experience while in the presence of a parent or guardian and help better prepare the teen to a lifetime of safe and responsible driving. All of these important teen driver safety initiatives work together to make Illinois roads safer and to save lives.

"The new law that resulted from the recommendations of my Teen Driver Safety Task Force makes Illinois' teen driver program one of the strongest in the nation and, more importantly, will save lives," said Secretary of State Jesse White. "I am encouraged by the significant decrease in teen driving deaths so far in 2008 and I think the public awareness generated by the new law, in conjunction with the Operation Teen Safe Driving initiative, is clearly having a positive impact on teen driving safety. I would like to congratulate the winners of this important program. Working together, we can save even more lives and make Illinois roadways safer for all of us."

28 high schools have been selected to participate in a half-day Ford sponsored "Ride and Drive" safe-driving clinic. These clinics will be taking place in the Chicago area, Central Illinois and Metro-East in the coming weeks. The "Ride and Drive" events will feature professional drivers giving young drivers rigorous behind the wheel driving exercises, including: Hazard Recognition/Accident Avoidance, Vehicle Handling/Skid Control and Speed/Space Management.

"We are very impressed by our high school students, whose efforts are helping make our roadways safer," said IDOT Secretary Milton R. Sees. "*Operation Teen Safe Driving* has been a very successful initiative, and we are proud to lead the way as the first state to offer a program of this magnitude."

"The Illinois State Police are honored to have partnered in this new safety program in an effort to save the lives of teen drivers," said Illinois State Police Director Larry G. Trent. "*Operation Teen Safe Driving* provides a means for young drivers to use their creativity and energy to increase awareness and safety on Illinois roadways."

In addition to the top four high schools in each region receiving an invitation to attend the Ford *Driving Skills for Life* "Ride and Drive" hands-on training, The Allstate Foundation has made it possible for the top school in each region to receive \$5,000 for an after-prom party. Also, up to 104 schools around the state will receive \$1,000 to \$3,000 for continuation of their *Operation Teen Safe Driving* programs.

"On behalf of Ford Motor Company Fund and the Ford *Driving Skills for Life* program, we congratulate the finalists as well as all the *Operation Teen Safe Driving* participants," said Jim Vella, President, Ford Motor Company Fund. "We are proud to be a part of such a great program that empowers teens to make a positive impact among their peers and in their communities by helping to save teen lives."

"Allstate is tremendously proud as a leading partner in the combined effort to save teen lives on Illinois roadways," said Dave Prendergast, Allstate Insurance Assistant Field Vice President and father of a teenage driver. "With high school prom and graduation celebrations happening all over the state in the next month, it's a critical time to make teens and their parents aware of the safety responsibilities young drivers assume every time they get behind the wheel."

The Office of the Governor, the Illinois Secretary of State, IDOT's Division of Traffic Safety, the Illinois State Police, the Illinois State Board of Education, and the Illinois Liquor Control Commission in partnership with the Ford Motor Company Fund and The Allstate Foundation are all backing the *Operation Teen Safe Driving* program. Also supporting the Illinois campaign are the Governors Highway Safety Association, RADD ("The Entertainment Industry's Voice for Road Safety"), and SADD ("Students Against Destructive Decisions").

Winning schools are as follows:

Region 1

1	Curie Metro High School	Chicago, IL
2	Maria High School	Chicago, IL
3	Dunbar Vocational Career Academy	Chicago, IL
4	De La Salle Institute	Chicago, IL

Region 2

1	Wheeling High School	Wheeling, IL
2	Seton Academy	South Holland, IL
3	Elk Grove High School	Elk Grove, IL
4	Alan B. Shepard High School	Palos Heights, IL

Region 3

1	Lake Forest High School	Lake Forest, IL
2	Romeoville High School	Romeoville, IL
3	Batavia High School	Batavia, IL
4	Lincoln-Way Central High School	New Lenox, IL

Region 4

1	Paxton-Buckley-Loda High School	Paxton, IL
2	Clifton Central High School	Clifton, IL
3	Alleman Catholic High School	Rock Island, IL
4	Gardner-South Wilmington High School	Gardner, IL

Region 5

1	Deer Creek-Mackinaw High School	Mackinaw, IL
2	Morton High School	Morton, IL
3	LeRoy High School	LeRoy, IL
4	Fieldcrest High School	Minonk, IL

Region 6

1	Midwest Central High School	Manito, IL
2	Quincy Senior High School	Quincy, IL
3	Gillespie High School	Gillespie, IL
4	Pleasant Plains High School	Pleasant Plains, IL

Region 7

1	Sesser-Valier High School	Sesser, IL
2	Mascoutah Community High School	Mascoutah, IL
3	Harrisburg High School	Harrisburg, IL
4	Edwardsville High School	Edwardsville, IL

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